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## **SEN. CLARKE'S GRANDPARENT RIGHTS BILL RECEIVES FIRST PUBLIC HEARING**

LANSING- State Senator Hansen Clark (D-Detroit) provided testimony today before the Senate Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs Committee in support of his bill which seeks to outline grandparent visitation rights relating to child custody matters. Senator Clarke pledged this summer that he would make modifications to Michigan's grandparent visitation statute following the Michigan State Supreme Court's ruling that the current law does not meet constitutionality requirements. Today's hearing was the first opportunity for public testimony on Senate Bill 734.

"The purpose of this legislation is not to second-guess the parent's decision but rather to create a mechanism for instances where there is a compelling interest for the courts to intervene," said Sen. Clarke. "My bill seeks to create a means to reconnect loving grandparents with their grandchildren in cases where a compelling interest can be established."

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled on August 1<sup>st</sup> that the current grandparent visitation law did not meet constitutionality requirements "as written." The Court's decision ruled the law unconstitutional because it did not give deference to a fit parent's decisions regarding what is best for the child.

"I'm fully committed to correcting the constitutionality concerns with this law and clearly spelling out the rights of Michigan grandparents in child custody disputes," said Sen. Clarke. "Grandparents in this state have a right to know where they stand in the eyes of the law."

The Committee did not vote on SB734 following today's hearing. A vote is expected at a future hearing.

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